

# Demolition irks neighbors

By JOSH ODELL  
STAFF WRITER

**ROCKPORT** — The demolition of a 150-year-old oceanfront house at 11 Beach St. was approved after the Gloucester Conservation Commission issued a "cease-and-desist" order on Aug. 29.

Front Beach was completely torn down Tuesday by local contractor Alan Battistelli, according to a member of the Zoning Board of Appeals without proper approval from the Conservation Commission, Alan MacMillan said. It makes

sion, the commission had previously said the building would not come down. "It was a violation of the order of conditions to tear that house down," MacMillan said.



Workers this week are tearing down the oceanfront house at 11 Beach St., located between Front Beach and Back Beach.

MacMillan said it makes many people on several town boards look like liars and like not coming down." "We can't be trusted," he said.

"It was a violation of the order of conditions to tear that house down," MacMillan said. "I place a cease-and-desist" order on any development on the parcel, though Battistelli will be able to clear debris from the site today to address safety concerns.

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## Perfect ending

The Manchester-Essex boys tennis team has finished its season with a perfect record. Page C1

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## Rockport

# ON: Beachfront home knocked down, angering neighbors

and that his role in the project does not extend beyond the demolition portion.

"I have no problem taking the blame for what happened as long as the whole story is clear," he said.

After a few weeks of preparing the building for demolition, Battistelli obtained a \$70 demolition permit on Monday, all the while telling people that he would take the building down completely.

On Tuesday his crew started by taking out the building's windows to keep broken glass off the ground, then they began taking apart the north part of the building — something that was allowed under the order of conditions.

Battistelli then had a 1 p.m. meeting with Conservation Agent Suzanne O'Connell, at which point he learned that the house's south end was not allowed to come down. His crews stopped working,

he said, but then noticed that the remnants of the roof were starting to collapse.

"It doesn't matter who or where the order of conditions were executed," he said. "That building was not capable of standing. It was structurally inferior."

To address the building's wavery state, Battistelli said he brought Building Inspector Paul Orlando to the site, and Orlando then issued an emergency condemnation permit to allow the destruction of the remainder of the building.

King Street resident Charmane Blanchard and commission member Frederick "Ted" Tarr suggested the commission investigate the condemning of the building's remainder, since the commission is supposed to receive notification of such an event — even in an emergency, Blanchard said.

"I see this as a slap in the face," Tarr said. "It's like if anyone comes into Rockport with a little money, then everyone just grabs at it."

King Street resident Paul Weiss

said he watched the demolition and contended that the building and its roof were not in condemnable shape.

"I was quite surprised when this big shovel went at the roof," he said. "The roof had not collapsed at all."

Planning Board Chairwoman Hildy Feuerbach said that Battistelli's experience with hundreds of proposals — both as a contractor and a member of the Zoning Board of Appeals — make his actions a "willful disregard for the laws."

Tarr said that the commission should consult town counsel to see if legal action could be brought against Battistelli and those behind the project, and he suggested that neighbors do the same.

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King Street resident Suzanne

Geoffrey said that she and several of her neighbors met on Sunday to talk about how part of the house may be removed, but that no one structure meets the code.

Battistelli said that he has not seen a design for the site's future house.

"At this stage, I'm as anxious to see the future design as anybody," he said.

The gazebo toward the ocean-side section of the property will not be demolished, Battistelli said. Cynthia Peckham, curator of the Sandy Bay Historical Society, said the demolished house was roughly 150 years old, and that it belonged to the Peg Leg Inn as a guest house until a few years ago.

Blanchard added that several residents are concerned that they will soon lose their views as a result of the future development.

Though exact project details are not available, Delaney has proposed building a single-family house with a swimming pool on the lot.

The demolished house did not comply with "front setback re-

quirements" in relation to Beach Street, according to Orlando, who added that he hopes the future added that he hopes the future

may be removed, but that no one structure meets the code.

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The gazebo toward the ocean-side section of the property will not be demolished, Battistelli said. Stephen VanDerwerken, owner of The Sunrise Grill across the street from the house, said that he doesn't mind Delaney's plans, provided they follow regulations.

"It doesn't really bother me," VanDerwerken, said. "I know it was an old house, but it was pretty well rotted out from what I could see over here."

"It's their property," he said. "As long as it doesn't infringe on my rights, I'm OK with it."